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ABSTRACT

This paper examines whether teachers and parents feel they influence school leaders' work in the policy field of community participation in government schools within the state of New South Wales (NSW), Australia. It reports on the implementation of recent policy initiatives designed to create school/family partnerships. In New South Wales, a move from decentralized school management to shared governance through devolution has placed greater responsibility on the schools and their leaders to gain the active participation of parents and community members and to be more publicly accountable to them. In particular, the Scott Management Review required that each school prepare, in collaboration with school councils, a School Renewal Plan that detailed the school's agreed-upon educational goals and priorities over a 5-year period. In 1994, the Home-School Connections Project was initiated in the Baysview area to explore the nature and effectiveness of home-school linkages. Data were collected through surveys of families and teachers in eight primary schools, interviews with parents and teachers, document analysis, and observation. Findings indicate that a significant number of parents sought ways to participate in their children's education and that many teachers attempted to attract parents into the classroom in ways beyond traditional school-council processes. Teachers were moving toward greater parent participation, though not all wanted to step beyond the traditional role of teacher. Authority was negotiated and shared among different interest groups over different problems and solutions. In summary, effective parent participation enhances the authority of both the home and the school/teacher. It is pointed out that the diversity of opinions need not be threatening; shared meanings are possible and the only way forward. Appendices included a sample report card and an abstract of related research (teacher-parent practices and perceptions of an urban-government school). Contains 48 references. (LMI)

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SCHOOL ◇ HOME CONNECTIONS
Political Relations in Policy Implementation

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part of a symposium on
Cross-cultural Perspectives on Diversity and Schooling
presented at the Annual Meeting of the
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Abstract *This paper reports on the nature of home<>school connections in a sample of New South Wales (Australia) public schools and comments on the ensuing micro-politics of implementing mandated policy in this area. Since the mid-1980s the context for these connections has been increasing amid significant policy shifts towards decentralised school management which entail a commitment to making schools more accountable to and reflective of their local community. In order to achieve these ends, many schools have striven for more open and participatory patterns of interactions but this has not been unproblematic. We report on two studies, one penetrating the dilemmas at the management/leadership end, delineating how the organisation of the school has been re-structured, and the other exposing the shared and contested perspectives between the occupational culture of schools and that of the home over what 'participation' means. The paper concludes with suggestions for better practice at the system, school and community levels based on our data-led assumption that the school<>home connection need not only reflect conflict.*

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In this paper we wish to explore the question whether teachers and parents feel they influence school leaders' work in the policy field of community participation in government schools within the state of New South Wales [NSW], Australia. Our paper reports on the implementation of recent policy initiatives designed to reform the relationship between schools and the family into one of partnership. The immediacy of these issues in public policy in Australia and internationally suggests that this paper addresses a practical problem [1]. Further, we will argue that our findings shed light on the question of social benefits for school children arising from enhanced school-home partnerships as well as on potential improvement to teachers' professional culture. One factor we investigated was the 'actor-preparedness' of school staff and families for more open and two-way school-home connections. Historically, in NSW at least, active parent/caregiver participation has met strong teacher resistance (Gammage, 1994, pp. 39-40). Therefore we asked:

- how likely is it that teachers will display an 'extended professionalism' through exploring the boundaries of practice allowed for in this policy;
- how far will the school leader(s) be able to establish legitimacy for this policy;
- to what extent does the relationship between home and the school depict an "invisible contract" (Berg, 1993) over spheres of authority?

Moreover, given that decentralisation of policy carries with it the potential danger of entrenching traditional teacher values (privacy, individualism and focus on the present in classrooms) rather than challenging and re-ordering them, the occupational culture of teaching may not be flexible enough to allow for a progressive version of school-home partnerships (Crump, 1992a, pp. 227-238). On the basis of earlier projects and pilot studies on this topic, we established that varied, competing and different expectations from a tableau of interest groups make school leaders' work complex and vulnerable to assorted inefficiencies in the implementation of policy (Eltis & Laws, 1993; Crump, 1992b). We considered also the possibility that there might be a contradiction between the stated policy goals of more collaborative school-home connections - viewing parents as active and responsible citizens - and teacher expectations about their professional role, their self-esteem profile and their privileged authority over work practices.

These questions focus sharply on the ambiguity and equivocation of mandated policy intentions and the reflection of these in school sites. Does this scenario make space for interest groups, such as parents, to enter the sites of power and attempt to adjust and/or resolve these ambiguities?

THE THEORETICAL CONTEXT

In order to understand the implementation process and organisation relationships under investigation for these issues, the projects reported in this paper followed precedents established by Ball's theory about management and change (Ball, 1987). Ball broke away from the standard and largely artificial view of organisations when he investigated the micro-political dimensions of decision-making, policy implementation and change in educational settings during the 1970s and 1980s in the United Kingdom. Additionally, theoretical insights have been gained by drawing on the philosophical perspective of Pragmatism, begun in the USA by Peirce, James and Mead at the turn of the century, extended by John Dewey in the 1930s and 1940s, and currently undergoing a third generation revival in the USA (Garrison, Cherryholmes and Rorty) and Australasia (Crump, Walker, Evers, Robinson).

While systems theories focus on individual participants and emphasise order, procedure and consensus, the researchers in these cases wanted to look at cultural dispositions which might achieve shared meanings and common goals (Crump, 1993, Chs 2, 3). The identification of these in school-home partnerships is most likely to arise when the topic is studied from a Pragmatist perspective (Evers, 1993, pp. 35-45) because Pragmatist principles must be tested through application to a real problem of knowing. Pragmatist principles have been tested in practice (Crump, 1995) and involve the following: exploring individual and/or group conditions; testing lived problems and competing solutions; setting few political, bureaucratic or professional divisions; allowing for more equal sharing of power; negotiating power over different contexts and problems; sharing as many perspectives as possible; engendering democratic and productive procedures; taking into account micro-political aspects of decisions; expecting a unity between formal goals and practical action; and encouraging unalienated educational work.

Pragmatist research thus entails an approach to educational problems through an analysis which encourages a diversification of control based on involvement, participation and school responsiveness. Pragmatists are not afraid of risk-taking and change as well as being happy to reassert those progressive values still possible within Late Modernity. Finally, Pragmatism sees reform intentions, sites of text production and workplace practices as competing for voice and power (Crump, 1995). As Cherryholmes (1994, p. 17) argues:

> Reform proposals defy pragmatic logic and sentiment when they ignore the desires and fears and pleasures and pains of those whose actions are required to bring the reforms about and those who are the targets of reform. Lasting change, a pragmatist might observe, cannot be instituted on the basis of commandeered labour.

The next section provides an account of such actions and targets in recent policy reform in NSW.

THE POLICY CONTEXT

In common with so many other countries, particularly in the Western world, there has been in Australia a dramatic turn-around in the way schools are being asked to manage themselves. A new emphasis is evident, with a focus on:

- goal-setting, with a future rather than a past orientation;
- the careful delineation of strategies, matched to goals, linked to performance indicators which allow for a closer assessment of progress towards goals;
- revitalising and improving leadership and management practices, with a strong emphasis on leading and managing to achieve "quality outcomes";
- the introduction of changed support structures to help schools cope with ever-increasing responsibilities.

Change has been quite dramatic:

> The past two decades have seen the most extreme changes to the administration and organisation of public schools in the various Australian states since the establishment of mass, compulsory schooling in the late nineteenth century. (Knight, Lingard and Porter, 1993, p.2)

Devolution has become the principle according to which schools as large organisations have been asked to manage themselves. In short, a universal trend has seen devolution, responsibility and accountability become the major catchcries as schools attempt to juggle multiple management and curriculum innovations. We should be wary of simply dismissing changed governance structures in schools as being a passing phase, resulting from determinations of politicians moving in and out of portfolios and seeking to leave their mark on the landscape. As Dimmock (1993, p.1) has pointed out, there are two major underlying reasons for restructuring and the trend towards school-based management with greater participation by and involvement of the community: one is educational and the other is economic and political. Both have as their goal improvement in the quality of education.

Chapman (1990) has argued that there are at least two dimensions to this concern for quality. The first is derived from the work of school effectiveness research which suggests that improvements in student achievement are most likely to be gained in schools which are relatively autonomous, have a capacity to resolve their own problems, and in which strong leadership, particularly but not exclusively by the school principal, is a characteristic (see, for example, Reynolds and Cuttance, 1992). Accepting this notion, Duignan (1990) has written of the need for schools to devise a curriculum which is client-based (that is, it takes into greater account student abilities, needs, aspirations) with a focus on school-based decision making, and with schools having control over resources themselves, enabling them to fine-tune curricula and target professional development for teachers and thereby contribute more effectively to the social and academic welfare of students. That is the first dimension.

Turning to the second, it cannot be denied that in recent years economic and political imperatives have been given a much higher profile by politicians, wanting to emphasise issues of productivity, and by teachers and unions who have often given a negative response, seeing this new emphasis as a potential threat to the traditional professional ethos of schools as they are asked to function in a more business-like fashion. Quoting Chapman: "In many countries the recent educational debate has been conducted in a context of alarm regarding the state of the economy and national competitiveness" and "in some countries education has received much of the blame for the nation's relatively poor economic performance" (Chapman, 1990, p.241). The result has been, and NSW is a good example, a trend whereby policy makers have been much more stringent in allocating resources and have established procedures for emphasising new accountabilities for schools to regional and central authorities and to their communities, with a stress on outcomes (productivity indicators) and awareness of school performance.

The issue is how to fuse the two dimensions. a) make schools more "client-centred", focusing on social and academic needs of students in particular schools serving particular communities and, b) at the same time emphasise school-based management which supports teachers and which provides, to central authorities and the public, adequate indicators of successful and productive use of resources in the pursuit of the school's carefully formulated goals. This is a tall order.

DEVOLUTION IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Many Australian states have undertaken major programs of education reform which have resulted in a massive shift towards school self-management (see Beare *et al*, 1991; Caldwell and Spinks, 1992). In NSW, many of the changes in the government school sector are the result of recommendations contained in two reports to emerge from a **Management Review of the NSW Education Portfolio,** established in 1988: Schools Renewal: A Strategy to Revitalise Schools within the NSW Education System (Scott, 1989) and School-Centred Education: Building a More Responsive State Education System (Scott, 1990) [2].

Brian Scott, a well-known international consultant, was commissioned by an incoming Liberal/National Party (Conservative) Government to conduct the review and a five-year implementation program was established in 1989. The aims of 'schools renewal' were to provide high quality education by revitalising the administration and operation of government schooling. The strategies were intended to promote more active involvement by the community, parents and the local community in the delivery of schooling. The process also was intended to provide the opportunity to build teacher esteem through devolving greater responsibility to the school level and through providing better career opportunities and upgrading of professional and administrative skills. Overall, the objective of the renewal strategies was to foster a dynamic environment in which educational change could take place on a continual basis through a widened partnership of interests. A major conclusion was the following:

> While many of the same questions need to be asked about content, structure and delivery of school education as in the past, the *answers have now changed*. In particular, the assumption that has guided the development of the New South Wales State school system for more than 100 years - namely, that the quality of school education is best achieved through a centralised system - is no longer valid for a modern, technologically-advanced state..... the past era of a highly paternal and protective leadership is no longer culturally appropriate or relevant. (Scott, 1990, p. xiii)

The findings and recommendations of the Scott Review, particularly the view that a "downside up" approach was to be adopted, requiring "the system to become totally committed to supporting the school, rather than the school being in support of the system" (Scott, 1990, p.67), had a profound impact on the 2227 schools, 60,000 employees and 750,000 students in the government school system. With regard to our focus, Scott argued that parental and community support for and involvement in the activities of the schools vary greatly from school to school. Scott suggested two reasons: socio-economic mix and the interest and leadership of the principal in promoting family involvement. Our case studies tested both assumptions.

The incoming government also established in 1988 the Committee of Review of NSW Schools, chaired by a former Australian Minister for Education, Sir John Carrick. The Report of the Committee (Carrick, 1989) was completed in September 1989. While it strongly supported the role of parental support on fostering children's academic achievement, it left the matter of how to ensure the community might play a more comprehensive role in school management to the Management Review (Scott, 1990) whose final report did not appear until nine months after the Carrick Report [3]. Additionally during this time there was a curriculum review which appeared as Excellence and Equity: NSW Curriculum Reform and the development of much of the detail of these reforms into legislation via the 1990 Education Reform Act.

The different timing of release for these linked but separately performed policy developments, as well as behind-the-scenes disagreements between the principal actors, created a degree of policy "adhocery" similarly identified by Ball (1993, p. 100-111) for the UK. None-the-less, the Committee of Review did offer support for a devolved system of School Management, observing that "in this devolution it will be essential for parents and the school to be real partners in education and for parents to participate in education decision making" (Carrick, 1989, p.159).

One of the most significant reforms to emerge from the Scott Management Review has been the requirement that schools should manage themselves by preparing a School Renewal Plan, designed to provide the basis for an on-going program of school improvement and "human resource" development. This Plan, according to Scott, was to be a simple document which would contain a program of action for achieving the school's *agreed educational goals and priorities over a five-year period*. It was to be developed in such a way as to help schools provide answers to four key questions:

- Where is the school now?
- What changes do we need to make?
- How shall we manage the changes over time?
- How shall we know whether our management of change has been successful?

The school principal was seen as having overall responsibility for the development and execution of the School Renewal Plan, but it was expected that the Plan would *appropriately reflect the aspirations and intentions of the school executive and teaching staff, the support staff of the school and the parents and the community*. The plan was to include indications of financial and staffing resource levels over the period. The annual and cumulative outcomes of the plan were to be published each year in a school report which was to be *circulated to parents, the community and Regional Officers*. As well, the government publishes its priorities and a "report" [Appendix A].

Other Departmental policy initiatives to encourage parent participation have been presented in The School Image (1989), Education 2000 (1992 p. 14, 25), Partnerships: Family Values and Education in NSW (1993), Strategic Plan 1993-1997 (1992, pp. 21-23), Partners in Education: Parents, Teachers and Children (1993), Parents' Guide to Schools (1994), Strengthening the Partnership (1994), and Achievement for Everyone: A Strategy for Equity in Education and Training in NSW (1994, p.3). In addition, there are very recent policies to make schools community centres and to provide consultants for parent training. All the above reflect emerging trends in the USA (see Frutcher, Galletta and White, 1993). This list, and the brief description above, make apparent the greater onus placed on schools and their leaders to gain the active participation of parents and community members and to be more publicly accountable to them.

SCHOOLS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES: PRE-DEVOLUTION

Prior to the Scott Management Review parental and other community input to schools in New South Wales was very limited though some states in Australia, notably Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory, had stronger input from communities. It is helpful to make a clear distinction between the terms *involvement* and *participation* when describing the roles the community might play in educational provision. A useful definition has been supplied by Cuttance (1993), writing as Head of the Quality Assurance Unit established by the NSWDSE in 1992 to conduct school reviews and document how schools were coping in a devolved system.

> The term *involvement* is used to mean the practical support by community members of school activities through support within the classroom, support in the preparation of teaching aids, fund raising, assistance with sporting activities and excursions, or assistance with the development of the physical environment of the school. The term *participation* is used to mean taking active part in the decision making processes of the school. (Cuttance, 1993, p.11).

According to Johnson (1993, p. 30) [writing as executive officer of an influential Parent and Citizens organisation], the current Director-General of Education in NSW, Ken Boston, has a perceptive understanding of the differences in meaning required for policy intentions to become

policy-in-use. Yet, supported by Newport (1992), Johnson argues that effective implementation of policy documents is impeded by "muddle-headedness" in the Department about these terms as well as an inadequate grasp of the different processes and principles required to support what he claims are different activities: involvement versus participation. Yet, Johnson's definition of "participation" is strikingly similar to Cuttance's: "Parent participation, on the other hand, is characterised by a real and effective sharing in decision-making" (Johnson, 1993, p. 28) though he goes on to restrict "participants" to P&C [PTA] type representatives. From our perspective, it is mistaken to view these as either/or propositions. We see involvement<----->participation as a spectrum with alternative strategies appropriate for alternative issues, problems or contexts.

Confusion and/or variety over meaning and practice is reflected in an investigation by the NSW Management Review which found (Scott, 1990, pp. 58-9) that community support for schools was *involvement rather than participation*. Involvement reflected traditional community roles or, in more recent years, it occurred through consultative mechanisms set up by the then Department of Education to gain advice on educational matters. The Review concluded that "participation in a decision-making sense, where the community actually has decision-making powers to affect the directions and policies of public education, has been virtually non-existent" (Scott, 1990, p.59).

The outcome of this analysis was a set of recommendations for a new structure designed to "provide increased opportunities for the community to participate in school planning and operation" and to "allow the establishment of School Councils in most New South Wales state schools by 1995 [4]. In other words, the new structure will enable schools to respond effectively to the needs of the students and the expectations of their communities in an educationally-enhanced way" (Scott, 1990, p.76). The proposed shift of focus involvement to participation is well illustrated by the power suggested for School Councils. Scott proposed that they should:

- develop aims and objectives for the school;
- ratify the School Renewal Plan developed by the principal to achieve their aims and objectives;
- nominate a representative to participate in the process of selecting the school principal;
- determine broad allocation of funds from the schools budget to support the implementation of the School Renewal Plan;
- ratify the non-core curriculum of the school in the context of available professional resources;
- develop school policies in such areas as student welfare and discipline; and
- establish procedures for the use of school buildings by community groups.
  (Scott, 1990, p.77)

To accomplish successfully such a comprehensive agenda requires not only a large commitment of time but high levels of skills and expertise in leadership and negotiation both on the part of the principal and on the part of those who might join a School Council. A huge step was proposed with wide ranging implications for schools, their staff at all levels, and for community members. By 1993 the External Council of Review, led by Scott, was able to state that there was a "higher

level of involvement in schools' activities by parents and the community, often through the 1,000+ school councils now established" and "There is a growing climate of co-operation and trust between schools and their communities" (Scott, 1993, p.1); though we note he has avoided using the term 'participation'.

The next section provides vivid accounts of the policy issues introduced above in the context of management and administration reform, followed by similar detail from a case study of school<>home connections.

THE "ASSISTING SCHOOLS WITH RENEWAL" PROJECT

In mid-1992 an independent project was established in a large Sydney Metropolitan Region of the Department of School Education involving two researchers from the University of Sydney, Ken Eltis and Kevin Laws. Four case study schools were involved in what was called the Assisting Schools with School Renewal Project which had the following aims:

- to analyse the processes followed to develop School Renewal Plans in selected New South Wales Primary and Secondary schools;
- to describe the various features of the School Renewal Plans as they developed;
- to gather data from staff, community and Cluster Directors relating to the School Renewal Plan and identify perceived strengths and weaknesses.

Five reports have been written of which four have been published (Eltis and Laws, 1993; Laws and Eltis, 1993, 1994a, b, c). What are some of the major findings to emerge from the Project as they relate to the present study? Three major issues are addressed below. They illustrate that while schools are making good progress in a devolved setting, they are not finding the going easy in the policy context outlined above.

Shifting the Focus of Thinking

Careful goal-setting and commitment to these goals demand considerable effort from all teachers in the school. The schools in the Project had considerable difficulty accepting that planning and renewal are an ongoing process and that teachers need to take a long-term view of what the school is or might be about. All of the schools developed renewal plans which are tightly focussed, based on perceptions of current circumstances and addressing the most immediate needs. The capacity to carry out a school needs survey (as suggested eg. by Hargreaves and Hopkins, 1991), leading to goal setting reflecting views experienced by parents, teachers, students and the broader community was not a strong feature.

Leadership and Commitment

Traditional ideas about school leadership were called into question as schools developed their Renewal Plan. Principals have to feel strong enough to be able to share their power with others in the school (at all levels) and be ready to promote the idea that the school will be successful only

if there is a collective effort at goal-setting and the subsequent pursuit of these goals. At the same time, teachers need to be prepared to develop and share expertise in the broader context of school life. For some, this means opening up the classroom door and entering into the broader life of the school, including its relations with its community, as new responsibilities in relation to school planning and the pursuit of goals are accepted.

Is It All Worth It?

Throughout the Project it was freely acknowledged by teachers in interviews that, as a result of the transfer of responsibilities to schools, opportunities are now there in ways that did not exist before for greater teacher and community *participation* in setting directions and establishing priorities. What is seen as an enhanced professional role for teachers is much appreciated by most teachers. It is acknowledged, however, that there has been a down-side as many teachers have found themselves dragged away from what they enjoy doing most - teaching their classes. A major conclusion from the Project is that we should avoid situations where teachers become bogged down in management issues or in endless discussions of how to streamline committee structures and decision-making processes (important though such matters are).

To look at the impact of School Renewal from the community perspective and thereby complement the brief picture given above from the school's perspective, some conclusions are presented below from a summary report prepared in late 1993 by the Quality Assurance Directorate (NSW) [5]. The observations below represent a synthesis of findings across 70 schools. The following summary comment suggests that while there has been considerable activity in the area of school-community relations following implementation of the Scott Review, the nature of that activity continues to *reflect community involvement rather than participation*:

> In the area of school and community relationships, it is clear that there is considerable parent involvement in schools, for example, working in the canteen and classroom. However, there is as yet relatively little parent participation in strategic or long term planning and decision making. The recently established school councils are often at the stage still of refining their roles and responsibilities. (Cuttance, 1993, p.2)

The Report does comment that "a positive picture of the increasing role of the wider community in determining the directions of schools and establishing priorities is emerging" and "there is a growing trend to formalise participation and empower parents through the formation of school councils especially among primary schools" (p.11). A notable achievement has been the enhancement of the image of schools when strong links are made with the community. The Report notes that amongst the factors perceived as contributing to a more positive image for the school (the most frequently mentioned in school review reports) are the openness and accessibility of the staff and their willingness to address the concerns of parents. "Whilst the level of satisfaction with the image of the school was generally reported as high, recommendations in

several reports indicated a need to increase the profile of the school by developing strategies to ensure greater publicity for school and student achievements" (p.12).

Achieving the outcomes proposed by Scott will not be easy. Schools have not been used to the community having a significant role to play in goal-setting and review of progress towards goal achievement. Perhaps the community itself will be unsure of how to manage new roles being assigned to it. But progress is being made.

> Almost all schools reviewed had developed effective strategies for consultation with community about important issues that arise at the school. The majority of the school reviews which had a focus in this area also indicated that there is some level of parent participation in decision making committees. (Cuttance, 1993, p.15).

However, we sense that further research is needed to judge the extent to which this progress embodies achievement of the levels of power recommended by Scott for School Councils [noted on p. 8] or whether there has been some filtering of policy intentions at the micro-level of reform.

The move to devolved decision making in a system which was highly centralised in its style of operation has placed considerable demands on those who work in schools. All members of staff, and especially those in leadership positions, have had to adapt to very different circumstances at a time, in NSW, when a program of curriculum reform has been introduced following the publication of a Government While Paper on the Curriculum (Excellence and Equity, 1989). Not only has it been necessary for schools to re-think how they might better manage themselves internally they have been required to "work smarter" to "promote active involvement by the community, parents and indirectly in the delivery of education" (Scott, 1990, p.3).

The community, for its part, now finds new roles being defined for it as it is asked to accept more responsibility for the well-being of its schools. Without training and support for those members who come to play influential roles in decision-making bodies schools will not derive full benefit from community input. Similarly, the community will need to be very mindful of its watchdog role as it safeguards the interests of its schools. Participation in discussions on goal-setting, priorities and budget matters should ensure that devolution does not lead to a diminution in the resources available to the school to enable it to meet the needs of all students. Concerns have been expressed that such an outcome could occur (see, for example, Hardy, 1989) as schools are thrown more and more onto their own resources and encouraged to supplement their budgets through productive associations with business.

What is urgently needed is detailed information about how schools are providing greater scope for community participation, and involvement, so that results of successful practice can be transmitted to teachers in other schools and new communities for consideration. Detailed studies of schools working with their communities provide the rich data needed for improving practice

and policy in this significant area. The aim should be to promote effective partnerships between schools and their communities, so that the school remains aware of changing circumstances within its sphere of operation and has the capacity to make well-reasoned adjustments. Such an approach supports the view that participation is not designed to lead to community acquiescence with lasting policies but exists to create new solutions to the problems and issues encountered.

THE "HOME-SCHOOL CONNECTIONS" PROJECT

As noted above, community participation and regular reporting to parents are two of five priority areas for the NSW Department of School Education for 1994 and 1995 (School Education News, 4:15, Oct. 1994, supplement). This is a policy initiative reflecting the need to link families, schools and family support services as portrayed in recent international policy developments.

Current community participation strategies towards creating better schools in NSW include schools as community centres (family rooms, community resource information), school and business community links (work experience and alternative learning sites), community involvement in schooling (curriculum development and planning), working with families (school-based family activities, consistent expectations), working with companion professions (counselling, juvenile aid personnel) and alternative community learning environments (community colleges, adult education)

In late-1992 a pilot study was undertaken to ascertain the worth of a larger independent project on the nature and effectiveness of home-school connections. The full project began early in 1994 intending to continue and expand research on this topic, though this time more from the point of view of staff, parents and pupils rather than that of management [6]. The new project aimed:

- To determine and compare parent/teacher expectations in NSW government primary schools regarding the impact of mandated policy on school-home partnerships;
- To determine parents', teachers' and school leaders' judgments about the steering of school-home partnership strategies;
- To explore if the state has replaced detailed rules with looser framework rules regarding education policy and to assess the impact of such changes in community participation;
- To employ Pragmatist principles to further our perspective on Australian education.

The direction of the research was influenced by visits by one of the research team in 1992 and 1994 to the Institute for Responsive Education at Boston University which is home for an international network of schools committed to promoting the social and academic success of students through family-community-school collaboration. Glenn (1992, pp. 59-63) suggests this allows families to be concerned with the 'why' of education, society as a whole with the 'what', and teachers with the 'how' [and pupils with the 'whether'!]. The forum for this network is The Centre on Families, Communities, Schools and Children's Learning headed by Epstein and Davies.

Research data from our study was fed into this network through participation in the 9th Annual Roundtable on Family-Community-School Partnerships held in San Francisco, April 1995.

Our pilot questionnaire found, against the expectations of some of the participants, that there was significant common ground between parents and teacher perspectives about central aspects of the life of the school. This not only suggested that an investigation into the Scott (1990) assumptions about school-family partnerships outlined early in this paper was feasible but also that a Pragmatist theoretical basis - which focuses on the shared and competing perspectives between groups in the process of solving practical problems - was appropriate for this research question. Therefore, the Johns Hopkins University survey was adapted and applied to 9 primary schools in what we call the "Bayview" cluster. Selecting a cluster of schools had two advantages: a) it provided a discrete and coherent administrative and geographical location and b) within the cluster of schools there was variation in socio-economic status and ethnicity [as established through 1992 Census statistics]. Therefore, we felt that the research sites provided adequate and sufficient parameters to test assumptions regarding school-home partnerships outlined earlier.

The research intention was researched through a multi-method approach which accepts quantitative and qualitative methods as complementary. This approach sought both depth and breath of data sources intending to construct, through triangulation of research strategies and techniques, as full a picture as possible within research limits of what was occurring with respect to the research aims. Surveys were negotiated with and approved by the trial school community [Northford] and approved by the Human Ethics Committee of the University of Sydney. The primary level of analysis was school-centred. This meant that ethnographic methodology had a working priority but was based on a platform of quantitative data collection and analysis.

The qualitative techniques included document analysis, observation, structured and unstructured interviews. Interview questions centred on each participant's understanding of the school-home strategies and the implications for changing respective school cultures. The various types of qualitative data were analysed for patterns, and categories developed so that the data could be dealt with in themes related the issues under review. The quantitative data were collated on Excel 4 and processed on SPSS. The qualitative data was collated using MS Access 1 and analysed for patterns. All procedures had features which aimed to protect participants through incorporating confidentiality, anonymity and discussion of draft research publications.

In May 1994 "Northford" Primary School acted as the trial site for the survey and interviews. Over 300 surveys were distributed with a return rate of 65%. In August, 467 surveys were distributed randomly to families across all classes in the 7 other schools (one having declined to participate) with a return rate of 61%. Ninety surveys went out to teachers in those schools with a return rate of 63%. Mawson (1994) undertook a study of the other school as part of her work

towards an undergraduate honours thesis [Appendix B]. The data presented below allow discussion of community/parent participation, parent advocacy/activism, decision-making power within schools and between schools and the broader educational context, issues such as homework policies and, of course, curricular and classroom practice issues related to teachers' professional concerns and parent expectations. In summary, our data allow us to respond to the question of how policies get translated into practice.

HISTORY AND PROFILE OF THE BAYSVIEW AREA

The Wangal Aboriginal people settled in the local area at least 40,000 years ago calling it "Wanne". This area extends about 10 miles along the shores of the inner Sydney harbour from where European occupation began in 1788 (and now stand the Sydney Harbour Bridge and Opera House). Middens, piles of seas shells, where the Wangal feasted are a reminder of this once vibrant culture. Following European "discovery" the Wangal people first enjoyed friendly contact but as contact increased they tried to fight back by attacking and burning huts and driving off stock. However, the Wangal community was broken up by disease and dispossession.

Extensive colonisation of Wanne lands began in 1793 on small land grants for farms and gardens but these battled to survive and eventually were consolidated into large estates. From 1921-1933 the local area was suburbanised with 12,000 people moving in to 3,000 new homes. From the 1920-1970s local estuarine wetlands, seen as hotbeds of disease, were filled in to make the many bayside parks that now service the area. Industry was established early due to easy access of road and river transport to Sydney. The Australian Gas Light Company began in the 1880s and the Arnotts biscuit factory in 1907. There remain over 90 industries in the local area. Most of the schools in Baysview are imposing brick complexes that portray the confidence of public education between World War I and II when they were built.

Baysview community is thus a collection of inner urban suburbs situated along - or just inland to - a series of bays and peninsulas along the Parramatta River west of the city of Sydney, NSW. The schools serve a diverse socio-economic, cultural and linguistic community. Students live in homes that are apartments, houses on the waterfront, public commission dwellings or 'typical' Sydney family homes. For the local government region, 46% of homes are owned, 8% being purchased, 22% are rented, 3.7% are public housing; 54% are houses, 9.5% semi-detached dwellings and 34.3% apartments [Australian Bureau of Statistics 1991 Census, Catalogue 2722.1, NSWLGA 2550: pages 1-22].

Students are generally Anglo-Saxon Celtic or European, with high proportions of recent Asian and Arab immigrants at specific school sites. These latter are schools of choice with some children travelling far to, for example, attend a Sri Lankan or Chinese school community. The median individual earnings is $A16,000-20,000. There are two peaks in average household income:

between $A5,000-16,000 and between $A40,000-60,000. Thus the community has a distinct division in wealth that is reflected in the home address rather than cultural group. The unemployment rate was 7.7%, significantly lower than other local (Sydney) regions and the national average [then over 11%], though there may be people not participating in the labour market but in the cashless or hidden (untaxed) economy.

THE BAYSVIEW DATA

The responses were evenly split between families with female and male pupils (49.8%): 80% were filled in by the mother, 16% by the father and the rest by other relatives/guardians at >1% each. Of the responses: 56% had one child at the school, 36% had 2 children, 7% had three children and 1% 4 or more. The full data for individual sites is held by each school and will be available in a detailed report to be published in June 1995. The schools in Baysview are highly regarded but there are areas the parent community felt needed to be addressed and some schools have responded quickly to these concerns. In the short summary below we provide a series of key positive and negative findings of the 281 responses completed sufficiently for analysis.

- 65% of parents/families in the Baysview data felt very strongly (YES) that **teachers cared** at their child's school and 33% felt this strongly (yes). Only 2% responded negatively (NO, no).
- 66% felt **very welcome** [97%= YES + yes], with schools sending out clear messages [73%=YES], and reaching most homes with invitations to school events [76%=YES].
- Most thought that schools have an **active Parents and Citizens Association** [57%=YES; 37% = yes] though **only 25%** reported attending meetings (documentary and anecdotal evidence indicates this self-report was exaggerated about double).
- **Community support** [52%=YES] and **partnerships** [60%=YES] were acknowledged and 60% reported the same involvement as for the previous year (1993) [7%=more; 16%=less].
- Most parents stated that they helped their child with writing, reading and mathematics though 82% [46%=YES; 36% = yes] responded they could **help more if shown how**.
- 98% of parents stated they talk to their child about school but 27% reported they had **not visited** their child's class [though 47% did regularly] and 26% had **not talked to their child's teacher**.
- 29% reported having **different goals** for their child than the school. 27% replied they had not been told the **skills** their child needed to learn.
- 35% of homes responded YES to being contacted about **problems.** 14% responded YES for contact about **improvement**.
- 64% reported contact about **fund-raising**, 49% about **committee membership**, 33% about **community services** and 27% about school **maintenance**.

Table 1: Survey Data (percentages) Baysview 1994 - Crump/Eltis

These statistics provide a pageant of home<>school connections. Baysview is a community in touch with its schools, with a sense of responsibility towards the education system and parent responsibilities to that system, at the same time projecting an intense concern about what schools do. While families are active in their support of their own child and of the school, they are looking for more precise information about what occurs in classrooms so that they can be sure their help is appropriate (see Ames, 1993 for US comparison). The following section outlines a triangulation of data sources we collected to confirm, or otherwise, the above survey results.

OTHER DATA SOURCES

The study aimed to gain a cross-section of views on home-school connections through a multiple set of data sources. As well as collecting data through the survey, the study also conducted a review of school policy documents such as the Annual Report, the school plan for the years ahead, the weekly Newsletter and other documents like the Homework Policy at Northford negotiated during 1994. These documents portray in general a high degree of concern by school management for better home-school connections. There are a number of factors influencing this:

- a genuine and long-held belief in this aspect of schooling at the primary [elementary] level;
- the impact of market forces which mean that if the school does not attract local and additional enrolments staff will be transferred out;
- the ongoing impact of recent government policies as outlined early in this paper;
- the multiple-use of some of the school sites [long day care and/or before-after school care].

The school plans and annual reports provide extensive detail on current practice. They list a number of inputs and outcomes for students, teachers and the school community including:

- parents as reading tutors (K-2) and with senior students having difficulty with reading, and a more active home reading program;
- community speakers and parent involvement in environmental education;
- formation of a School Council (though not with unanimous agreement);
- significantly improved fund-raising; surveys on homework and other topics;
- parent/coffee rooms initiated in 3 schools; and
- increased communication through greater staff/parent collaboration on committee work.

In addition, interviews were planned and conducted with parents and teachers. As it turned out, only two senior members were interviewed, both at Northford. However, we held a workshop for principals early in 1995 to gain their response to the results for their school and their reaction to our interpretation of the results for the Baysview community as a whole. The senior staff confirmed impressions gained from the documentary and survey data: while home-school connections have a high priority there are areas where the concerns of the home and the school have yet to cohere and that other policy concerns compete for attention. Ten percent of assistant teachers offered to be interviewed though organisational difficulties meant that only 6 were taped.

Generally, these interviews confirmed the survey data from over 70 teachers which indicated a fairly evenly spread continuum of enthusiasm<->disinterest for community participation. The interviews uncovered a series of professional qualms and even hostility towards *active* parent input rather than less contentious 'involvement'. Some comments indicated stereotypes of parents as "uninformed, "just not interested", "interfering" and "untrustworthy". None-the-less, for the early years of primary schooling, parents are encouraged, welcome and highly valued [7].

Parent interviews were very informative and likewise confirmed findings from the survey that indicated the importance of school for families in this community. We conducted interviews with over 40 families, some individually at their home, others in group interviews held during different times of the day to enable as many people as possible to attend. One interview was conducted over the phone. We believe that we achieved a representative cross-section of adults from the different schools as well as from different socio-economic levels [8]. Parent support for their child(ren) is very high and parental concerns about school practices reflect a mature balance of strong support for each school against critical reflection about how various aspects might be improved. These suggestions include:

- Preparation of older children for the transition to secondary school [junior high]
- Promotion of social skill development
- More sports activities [there is no inter-school sport for most schools in the Baysview cluster]
- More effective policies for playground violence and for "quiet" boys
- Detailed information about curriculum programming for each term
- Homework requirements explained to assist parents
- Timing events better to allow working parents to attend
- Continuous feedback on student progress during the year
- The opportunity to learn community languages at school
- More Music and Physical Education
- More support for gifted and talented students
- Consistency in policies across the school.

The basis for this critique is a view that they, as parents, are just as accountable for their child's education. Parents view themselves as responsible for the child but give teachers the right to educate and care for them in school. This is an interesting finding; while not unexpected it confronts the nature of compulsory schooling centrally controlled by the government.

Our keystone to this analysis is that parents value the school but are looking at how they might contribute to and/or extend areas of good practice. They feel it is important that the community should have a sense of belonging to the school and that it is important that this works both ways. Some parents expressed a personal concern, almost guilt, about not being able to help their child or school enough due to family/work commitments. Overall, the families in Baysview provide a rich resource for the schools as a diverse and articulate community tentatively reaching in, to which the schools reach out with varying success.

CONCLUSIONS

Far too often the issues and policies outlined in this paper, and the research about them, poses this question: Is the school or the family more important for a child's success in school? We think this is the wrong question, one which poses a false dualism. One answer has been that they are both important, but for different areas of a child's education (see Reynolds, Sullivan and Murgatroyd, 1987). This is also unsatisfactory. Not only does it create another false division between formal and informal knowledge but also it creates a context within which the two participants are seen as divided. This, in turn, allows them to blame each other when things go wrong. We are with Epstein (1992, p. 1148) when she suggests that for the 1990s "the focus of research and practice is clearly on partnerships and shared responsibilities". As a consequence of the data collected, our research has focused on the following three questions:

- Which interest group(s) has/have authority over the forms of the school's activity?
- Is the change currently taking place in this area of school activity to be regarded as a reform penetrating existing boundaries or is it an innovation within these?
- Which sources of authority are decisive for the content and form of the school's actual activity, and on which institutional values base are these sources of steering founded?

What the Baysview study tells us is happening alongside the changes to teachers' work as outlined in the Schools Renewal Study is that a significant number of parents are seeking ways to take a higher profile in their child's education and that many teachers are attempting to attract parents into the classroom in ways beyond what can be achieved through traditional P&C and School Council processes. There are deeply ingrained individual and institutional histories that need to be overcome; teacher disappointment in perceived support or interest from the home and parents' negative experiences with education, either their own or their child's.

But what we have now is a happy confluence of interests. Increases to workloads and changing professional practices are driving teachers towards greater parent involvement *and* participation (Catalano & Hepworth, 1994, p. 11) though not all want to step beyond the traditional role of "teacher" (Labone, 1994). Touchstone arises as parents exercise improved rights and access to public schools in what Brown (1990, p. 66) describes as the 'Third Wave' in education, an 'ideology of parentocracy' [though this wave took shape in the UK as early as the Great Debate of 1976-7, see Whiteside, 1979, p. 82; and has a long history in the USA, see Henderson and Berla, 1994].

While sharing the concerns of Gewirtz, Ball and Ball (1994) that market systems privilege certain groups or classes of parents and children, there appear to be clear links between high levels of parental input and choice of school (Crump and Walker, 1994). Anderson (1992, p.1) claims that this mirrors a shift from parental voice and participation to exit and choice in Anglo-American countries. But in NSW, it is quite common for the choice to be the local school unless parents feel there is a very good reason to seek a placement elsewhere which can be very disruptive to family life and incur significant additional costs. **What does change is the political relation**

between home and school, and the space for this change has been created by the mandated policies alluded to throughout this paper. Ramsay et al. (1987) demonstrated, for New Zealand, that 'working class' schools are able to define a broad range of characteristics of successful schools built upon a meaningful community relationship. That is, "effective schools" are not only found in middle class suburbs with a traditional academic curriculum.

Which interest groups have authority? It is negotiated and shared over different problems and solutions. Have the reforms penetrated existing boundaries? Yes and no - teachers work is changing in relation to policy shifts and the home is more closely connected to the school than before these policies "renewed" the schools. Which sources of authority are decisive and which values come into play? We believe that effective parent participation enhances the authority of both the home and the school/teacher. Both remain central institutions in our social contexts and provide a balance of values and beliefs from which the child can learn and grow. The search for common ground begins by accepting that there will be differences in opinions, perceptions and expectations between the home and school and that closer connections may bring these tensions to the fore. But diversity of opinions does not have to be threatening. As parent participation increases (successfully), so will expectations about new levels and sites for participation. But our studies have shown that shared meanings are possible and, we contend, the only way forward.

As we develop this project during 1995 we will be putting our judgments to the test. However, there are a number of new focal points we will need to consider:

- Does the filtering of power to parents allow the growth of a democratic educational community?
- To what extent are home<>school connections overshadowed by school<>business links?
- Do students want a say in policy decisions and are there processes available or possible?
- Are there obstacles at the junior high level that block a similar path of reform?
- Can we take it for granted that there will always be political space in which to pursue home<>school issues in education policy?
- To what extent do these polices reflect conservative, liberal democratic or social democratic ideology?

While heading in this direction, we invite your criticisms and insights on what we have outlined in this paper to ensure that what we do is productive and worthwhile.

NOTES: WE ARE ABLE TO PROVIDE LARGE TYPE COPIES OF THIS PAPER ON REQUEST. We approve tape-recording of our presentation for the purposes of private study.

We wish to acknowledge funding for the project for 1994 provided through the URGS grant Scheme of the University of Sydney and for 1995 by the Australian Research Council. Permission for the research was granted by the Metropolitan East Region of the NSWDSE and research protocols were approved by the University of Sydney Human Ethics Committee. Copies of the research instruments may be obtained by writing to the correspondence address listed below. NSWDSE = NSW Department of School Education.

1) This topic area is a key aspect of the Federal review of the compulsory years of schooling (for example, *Five to Fifteen*, Schools Council Project Paper No. 8, NBEET, Canberra: AGPS) and of recent New South Wales [NSW] government initiatives ("Schools new centres for public", *School Education News*, 5(6) May 4, 1994, page 1).

2) Interestingly, these reports were not ignored by the private school sector (catering for approximately 30% of secondary students in church, alternative and independent arrangements).

3) Carrick insisted on release of his report before the Scott Report, possibly sensing the eventual public outcry over some aspects of the reforms (culminating in 50,000 people demonstrating outside Parliament House in Sydney). Carrick also did not follow his terms of reference to the letter, differing with the government over the placement of the Tertiary Entrance Score on the Higher School Certificate (like the High School Diploma but based on a common external examination providing a score/100 used to gain entry to tertiary education) and adding a section on the importance of early childhood education.

4) There were 1,400 School Councils at the end of 1994 (Lewis, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30/1/94, p. 9). The NSWDSE will spend $350,000 in 1995 training people for School Council roles (23,000 parents in 1994).

5) At the time of writing the School Renewal program was in its 4th year, though the Quality Assurance unit had been operating for less than 1 year during which time it conducted reviews in 93 schools. By Dec. '94 QA had interviewed 60,000 people including 18,000 parents & 15,000 students (*SEdNews*, 23/1/95, p.11).

6) This study was completed on schedule with the research instruments finalised, ethics approval granted, research access approved and the first distribution of surveys to over 200 homes by May 1994. Preliminary analysis was completed in June for presentation at a conference in Uppsala, Sweden and to the League of Schools Reaching Out at Boston U. 500 adapted surveys were then distributed to the 7 other schools in August and research reports were presented to participating schools in the final week of the year.

7) There is no space here to provide quotes. Detailed empirical evidence is provided in our paper presented to the 9th Annual Roundtable on Parents, Communities and Schools held on Monday 17th April 1995 in San Francisco [sponsored by the IRS, Boston University]. Also, a full-scale report should be ready by mid-June 1995. Please write to the correspondence address for copies.

8) The only ethnic group not represented was Chinese. Even though a number of these families agreed to participate in interviews, all withdrew. One possible explanation is the English language difficulty this group may have though a significant number are from Hong Kong, work as professionals and have high language proficiency. Another factor may be that the work commitments of many in this group, as new migrants, did not allow time. One of the teachers suggested that this group will say 'yes' to school requests to "save face" but not follow through. One parent informed us that a good strategy for Hong Kong parents was to get them into classes to see what happened, meeting their curiosity and developing a climate for volunteering after building up relationships [CPHWPI].

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Appendix A

Community Participation

Increasingly, parents, business people and others in the community are playing a role in public education.

A key to this has been the increase in the number of school councils operating throughout the State. By September 1994, two thirds of all schools had established councils, giving parents, staff and community members a real say in the way their school is run.

Parents were this year given increased opportunities to take part in training. More than 23,000 parents and community members took training courses to help them in their roles on school councils and parent groups.

A strengthening of the links between schools, business and industry has been another important feature of community participation initiatives. Opportunities for students and teachers to experience a wide range of workplaces were given through schemes such as the *School Industry Links* program, the *Schools' Visits to Industry Program* and the *Teachers in Business* scheme, and by the eleven *Industry Education Networks* based in centres across NSW.

Happy and Safe Schools

Parents, students and teachers agree that a safe, secure and pleasant learning environment is vital for effective teaching and learning.

School communities across the State took steps to ensure schools remained free of bullying and harassment. A new suspension policy gave principals greater powers to deal with troublemakers, while a wide range of programs was used to teach young people appropriate behaviour and ways of peacefully settling disputes.

Additional specialist teachers, teachers aides, community liaison officers and school counsellors were employed at a cost of more than $5 m to assist schools in these efforts. This was further boosted by the announcement of an extra 200 counsellors to be appointed in 1995.

Steps were also taken to improve road safety and water safety for students.

NSW Department of School Education

REPORT CARD 1994

The public schools of New South Wales had five priorities for 1994: Quality Teaching, Quality Learning, Regular Reporting to Parents, Community Participation, and Happy and Safe Schools.

These priorities focused attention on the most important role of a public school system — providing young people with a quality education in a secure environment, with schools working in partnership with parents and the wider community.

This brochure sets out the achievements of the public education system in the priority areas over the past twelve months. They should be a source of pride for parents, students, teachers and other staff as we prepare for 1995.

Ken Boston
Director-General of School Education

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Quality Teaching

Quality teaching is essential if young people are to learn effectively. The Department of School Education provides excellent support for teachers, enabling them to focus on their work with students.

During 1994, teachers were supported by the establishment of a network of teaching experts in each of the eight Key Learning Areas. Teachers can turn to these experts for advice and information, particularly in relation to new courses such as the primary English syllabus which was introduced during 1994.

The Department provided a major training and development program for teachers at a cost of $40 m. This involved more than 34,000 teachers attending courses to update their skills and learn about latest developments in key areas of the curriculum.

Early childhood education was given particular attention. One hundred additional Kindergarten and Year 1 teachers were employed to boost the literacy levels of our youngest students.

Schools were provided with a large number of support materials – including books and videos – to help teachers implement changes to the curriculum.

Quality Learning

NSW schools have embarked on an important curriculum initiative aimed at improving student learning.

Teachers this year began using new syllabus documents which contain student outcome statements — information which helps teachers accurately assess their students' current levels of achievement and their rate of progress in learning. This information is invaluable for lesson planning and assessment. It also permits teachers to tailor lessons for individual students.

Options for senior secondary students were increased with the release of *Directions* , which sets out four "pathways" to the HSC through schools and TAFE. The pathways enable students to shape a course of study which fits with their career plans and future learning.

More use was made of the results of the Higher School Certificate, the School Certificate and the Basic Skills Test to determine where the Department's resources could best be directed to improve student learning.

Regular Reporting to Parents

Parents and the wider community can rightly expect to be kept informed about the achievements of students in schools.

During 1994 many schools began to experiment with new student report formats which explain what students know and can do as a result of their learning rather than simply providing a mark or a ranking against other students.

Over 175,000 students in Years 3, 5 and 6 completed the Basic Skills Test in literacy and numeracy. Parents were provided with more specific details on their child's achievements in the basic skills test than in previous years.

Over 560 schools were reviewed by quality assurance teams, which work with staff, students and parents to identify strengths as well as areas for further development. Each school involved was given a report detailing the key findings and recommendations.

A number of documents were produced for parents, providing them with information about schools and their child's learning. These included a *Parents' Guide to Schools* and *"What should my child be able to do in English and Maths?"*

Appendix B

Teacher - Parent Practices and Perceptions at an Urban Government Primary School

Tanya Mawson 1994

The main concern of this thesis is the issue of how policy related to parental participation in public schools is translated into practice. The research involves the investigation of the practices and perceptions of teachers and parents at a government primary school in metropolitan Sydney, New South Wales.

The research took place during 1994 and utilised a multi-method approach to data collection. Document analysis, a parent survey, and a teacher group interview were used as the primary sources of data collection. The analysis of the data was aimed at establishing an understanding of:

- The level of participation that was operating within the school.
- The factors which inhibit or facilitate parent participation.
- The extent to which the perceptions of teachers and parents overlap on the issue of parent participation.
- The extent to which government policy initiatives effect the level of parent participation in the school.

The theoretical position of Pragmatism was assumed as a means to establish the framework for the research, and to interpret and explain the research results.

The research findings indicate that the level of parent participation operating in the school is minimal, and does not effect the existing power structure of the school. The factors that inhibit parent participation included teachers perceptions of their role as 'professionals', and parents perceptions of their role within the school. Other factors such as commitments to work, and parents lack of confidence in becoming involved, or participating in school activities also served as barriers. The research findings suggest that government policy related to parent participation within the school has little impact upon the school culture.

Areas of 'touchstone' or points of agreement among the teachers and parents were located within the data which included: The role of parents as advisers for, and supporters of, school decision making. The notion of teacher 'expertise' in education being of higher value than parental knowledge of their children. And the modes and structure of parental involvement and participation which are expected form parents within the school.

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SCHOOL ◇ HOME CONNECTIONS

√ **Current central policy aims to change the relationship between schools and the family into one of partnership. This is part of an international trend which includes devolution of central authority to school-level management for a range of policy matters.**

√ **Overseas research: There an "Invisible Contract" which gives school leaders their authority (Berg, 1990).**

√ **Research base - Eltis: School leaders' work is complex and vulnerable.**

√ **Research base - Crump: There is ambiguity in mandated policy and (confusing) ongoing change.**

√ **Questions:**

* **How to make schools more client-focussed as well as remaining accountable to central authority?**

* **Is there an "invisible contract" between school and home over power sharing and decision-making?**

√ **Issues:**

* **community support varies greatly from due to a) socio-economic mix and b) influence of school leaders.**

* **teachers' and parents' influence over school leaders' work in community connections varies greatly.**

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